

**AMENDMENTS TO THE CLAIMS**

1. (Currently Amended) A die cutting apparatus, comprising:

at least one metal base portion in the form of a plate having a front surface, a back surface and perimeter sides;

at least one blade fixedly attached to and extending outwardly from said front surface of said at least one metal base portion and exposing at least one cutting edge along an edge of said at least one blade, said at least one metal blade forming an enclosed shape;

a covering disposed at least partially over said back surface of said at least one metal base portion and at least partially covering said perimeter sides of said at least one metal base portion; and

a layer of adhesive interposed between said back surface of said at least one metal base portion and said covering, wherein the layer of adhesive permanently fixedly attaches said back surface of said at least one metal base portion to said covering.

2-16 (Cancelled)

17. (Previously Presented) The die cutting apparatus of claim 1, wherein said covering is comprised of plastic.

18. (Previously Presented) The die cutting apparatus of claim 1, wherein said covering increases the overall thickness of the die cutting apparatus for adapting said at least one blade for use with an existing die cutting press.

19. (Previously Presented) The die cutting apparatus of claim 1, wherein said covering extends substantially over said back surface of said at least one metal base portion and substantially along at least a portion of said perimeter sides of said at least one metal base portion.

20-32. (Cancelled)

33. (Withdrawn) The die cutting apparatus of claim 1, further comprising a release pad attached to said top surface of the at least one metal base portion.

34. (Withdrawn) The die cutting apparatus of claim 33, wherein said release pad has a thickness approximately equal to a height of said at least one blade above the top surface of the at least one metal base portion.

35. (Withdrawn) The die cutting apparatus of claim 33, wherein said release pad is comprised of at least one of neoprene or foam rubber that is compressible to expose the at least one cutting edge of said at least one blade when the release pad is pressed against a material to be cut.

36. (Previously Presented) The die cutting apparatus of claim 1, wherein said at least one metal base portion and said at least one blade are separate components that are welded together to form a cutting die.

37. (Withdrawn) The die cutting apparatus of claim 1, wherein said at least one metal base portion and said at least one blade are integrally formed to form a cutting die.

38. (Withdrawn) The die cutting apparatus of claim 37, wherein said cutting die is an etched die.

39. (Withdrawn) The die cutting apparatus of claim 37, wherein said cutting die is a cast die.

40. (Currently Amended) A die cutting apparatus, comprising:

- a metal plate having a front surface, a back surface and perimeter sides;
- at least one metal blade fixedly depending outwardly from said front surface of said at least one metal plate, said at least one metal blade forming an enclosed shape, said at least one metal blade having an exposed cutting edge for cutting into a medium in sheet form;

- a housing disposed over said back surface of said metal plate and at least partially covering said perimeter sides of said metal plate; and

- a layer of adhesive interposed between said back surface of said at least one metal base portion and said housing, wherein the layer of adhesive permanently fixedly attaches said back surface of said at least one metal base portion to said housing.

41. (Withdrawn) The die cutting apparatus of claim 40, wherein said metal plate and at least one metal blade are integrally formed.

42. (Withdrawn) The die cutting apparatus of claim 40, wherein said housing is comprised of a softer material than said metal plate to allow penetration of small protrusions in said back surface of said metal plate.

43. (Previously Presented) The die cutting apparatus of claim 40, wherein said housing is comprised of a softer material than said metal plate to substantially uniformly distribute a force being applied to said housing to said back surface of said metal plate.

44. (Previously Presented) The die cutting apparatus of claim 43, wherein said housing is comprised of molded plastic and configured with a recess that substantially matches the perimeter sides of the metal plate.

45. (Previously Presented) The die cutting apparatus of claim 40, wherein said housing increases the overall thickness of the die cutting apparatus to allow the metal plate and at least one metal blade to be used in an existing pressing device.

46. (Previously Presented) The die cutting apparatus of claim 45, wherein said housing is an adapter having a predetermined thickness to adapt said metal plate for use with an existing pressing device.

47. (Currently Amended) A die cutting apparatus, comprising:

- at least one metal base portion in the form of a plate having a front surface, a back surface and perimeter sides and defining at least one channel therein;

- at least one blade fixedly positioned within said at least one channel and extending outwardly from said front surface of said at least one metal base portion and exposing at least one cutting edge along an edge of said at least one blade, said at least one blade bonded to said at least one metal base portion, and said at least one metal blade forming an enclosed shape;

- a covering disposed over said back surface of said at least one metal base portion and substantially covering said perimeter sides of said at least one metal base portion; and

- a layer of adhesive interposed between said back surface of said at least one metal base portion and said covering, wherein the layer of adhesive permanently fixedly attaches said back surface of said at least one metal base portion to said covering.

48. (Previously Presented) The die cutting apparatus of claim 47, wherein said covering is comprised of plastic.

49. (Previously Presented) The die cutting apparatus of claim 47, wherein said covering increases the overall thickness of the die cutting apparatus for adapting the at least one metal base portion to be used with an existing die cutting press.

50. (Cancelled)

51. (Withdrawn) The die cutting apparatus of claim 47, further comprising a release pad attached to said top surface of the at least one metal base portion.
52. (Withdrawn) The die cutting apparatus of claim 51, wherein said release pad has a thickness approximately equal to a height of said at least one blade above the top surface of the at least one metal base portion.
53. (Withdrawn) The die cutting apparatus of claim 51, wherein said release pad is comprised of at least one of neoprene or foam rubber that is compressible to expose the at least one cutting edge of said at least one blade when the release pad is pressed against a material to be cut.
54. (Withdrawn) The die cutting apparatus of claim 1, wherein the plate includes  
a base plate defining an upper surface and a lower surface,  
an upper layer of plating disposed adjacent the upper surface of the base plate, and  
a lower layer of plating disposed adjacent the lower surface of the base plate.
55. (Withdrawn) The die cutting apparatus of claim 1 further comprising  
a second layer of adhesive disposed adjacent the front surface of the plate; and  
a release pad disposed adjacent the second layer of adhesive.
56. (Withdrawn) The die cutting apparatus of claim 40, wherein the metal plate includes  
a base plate defining an upper surface and a lower surface,  
an upper layer of plating disposed adjacent the upper surface of the base plate, and  
a lower layer of plating disposed adjacent the lower surface of the base plate.
57. (Withdrawn) The die cutting apparatus of claim 40 further comprising  
a second layer of adhesive disposed adjacent the front surface of the metal plate; and  
a release pad disposed adjacent the second layer of adhesive.

58. (Withdrawn) The die cutting apparatus of claim 47, wherein the plate includes  
a base plate defining an upper surface and a lower surface,  
an upper layer of plating disposed adjacent the upper surface of the base plate, and  
a lower layer of plating disposed adjacent the lower surface of the base plate.
59. (Withdrawn) The die cutting apparatus of claim 47 further comprising  
a second layer of adhesive disposed adjacent the front surface of the plate; and  
a release pad disposed adjacent the second layer of adhesive.
60. (Withdrawn) A die cutting apparatus, comprising:  
a base member having a top surface, a bottom surface, and a perimeter, wherein the base member includes a base plate defining an upper surface, and a lower surface, an upper layer of plating defining a crown surface, and a base surface disposed adjacent the upper surface, wherein the base plate and the upper layer of plating each define a passage co-axial with one another, and a lower layer of plating defining a support surface disposed adjacent the lower surface; and  
a blade secured to the base member, wherein the blade extends from the support surface of the lower layer of plating without traversing a thickness of the lower layer of plating, through the passage formed in each of the base plate and the upper layer of plating, and past the crown surface of the upper layer of plating.
61. (Withdrawn) The die cutting apparatus according to claim 60, wherein the at least one blade forms an enclosed shape.
62. (Withdrawn) The die cutting apparatus according to claim 60 further comprising  
a housing adapter covering disposed at least partially adjacent one or more of said top surface, bottom surface, and perimeter.
63. (Withdrawn) The die cutting apparatus according to claim 62, wherein said housing adapter covering is configured with a recess that substantially matches the perimeter of the base member for permitting receipt of the base member within the housing adapter covering.

64. (Withdrawn) The die cutting apparatus according to claim 62 further comprising  
a layer of adhesive interposed between said bottom surface and said housing adapter covering.
65. (Withdrawn) The die cutting apparatus according to claim 62 further comprising  
means for adapting the blade for use with a die cutting press, wherein the means for adapting  
includes the housing adapter covering.
66. (Withdrawn) The die cutting apparatus according to claim 62 further comprising:  
means for uniformly distributing a force being applied to said housing adapter covering to  
said bottom surface, wherein the means for uniformly distributing includes the housing adapter  
covering having a first material, wherein the base plate includes a second material, wherein the first  
material is comprised of a softer material than the second material.
67. (Withdrawn) The die cutting apparatus according to claim 60 further comprising  
a layer of adhesive disposed adjacent the crown surface; and  
a release pad disposed adjacent the layer of adhesive.
68. (Previously Presented) The die cutting apparatus of claim 1, wherein the layer of adhesive fixedly  
attaches said back surface of said at least one metal base portion to said covering.
69. (Cancelled)
70. (Previously Presented) The die cutting apparatus of claim 1, wherein the covering provides  
means for translating a pressing force applied thereon to be more uniformly applied at the at  
least one cutting edge along an edge of said at least one blade.
71. (Previously Presented) The die cutting apparatus of claim 40, wherein the layer of adhesive  
fixedly attaches said back surface of said at least one metal base portion to said housing.
72. (Cancelled)

73. (Previously Presented) The die cutting apparatus of claim 40, wherein the housing provides means for translating a pressing force applied thereon to be more uniformly applied at the exposed cutting edge.

74. (Previously Presented) The die cutting apparatus of claim 47, wherein the layer of adhesive fixedly attaches said back surface of said at least one metal base portion to said covering.

75. (Cancelled)

76. (Previously Presented) The die cutting apparatus of claim 47, wherein the covering provides means for translating a pressing force applied thereon to be more uniformly applied at the at least one cutting edge along an edge of said at least one blade.